UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CONF.85/L.30
9 July 1992

ENGLISH ONLY

SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
New York, 25 August-3 September 1992
Item 6 (e) of the provisional agenda*

TOPONYMIC DATA FILES: NATIONAL GAZETTEERS

Report on the gazetteer program of the United States of America

Paper submitted by the United States of America**

---

* E/CONF.85/1/Rev.1.

** Prepared by Roger L. Payne, United States Geological Survey.

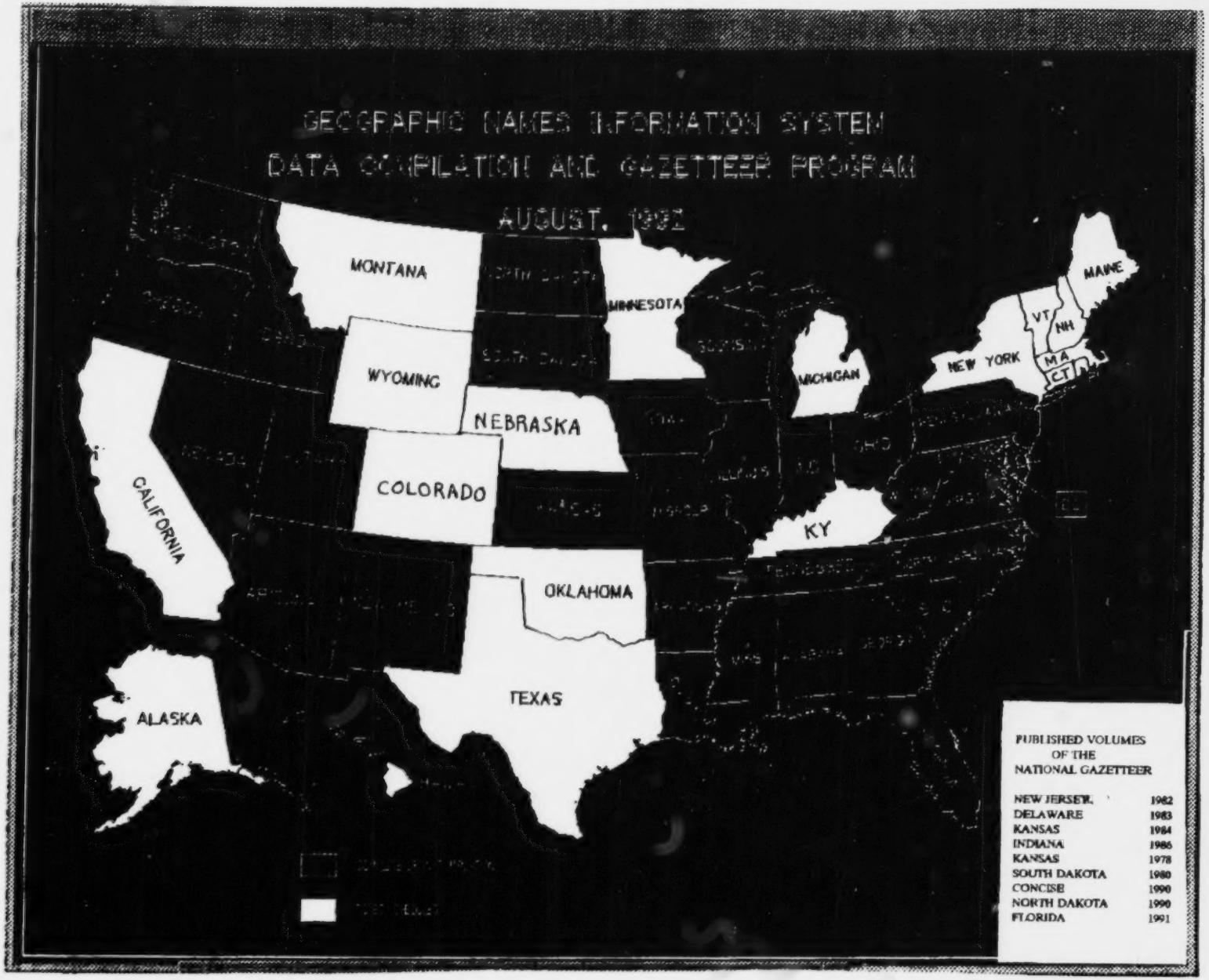
92-30197 3300h (E) 160792

210792

/...

1. The National Gazetteer of the United States of America is being published as United States Geological Survey Professional Paper 1200 with each state, territory and outlying area to be published as a separate volume. The National Gazetteer is a product of the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS). Data compilation for the national Geographic Names Data Base, the primary component of GNIS, is accomplished in two phases. Phase I, begun in 1976 and completed in 1981, entailed the collecting and recording of most names and associated information from the large-scale topographic maps published by the Geological Survey, and the records of the United States Board on Geographic Names. Approximately 2 million feature names and variant names were recorded and processed into the national Geographic Names Data Base.

2. Phase II, the compilation and collection of names and associated information from other sources, was begun in 1982. The projected completion date is 1998-2002. Research and compilation in this phase is more comprehensive and therefore more time consuming. Instructions detailing the methodology for researching, compiling, and encoding names and associated information are provided in Geological Survey Circular 1011 (Orth and Payne, 1987). Checks and balances are built into the methodology as well as in the GNIS data input software to ensure adherence to the principles and policies of the Board on Geographic Names. Quality and detail are paramount in this effort; therefore, the assistance of local experts and interested organizations is solicited for compiling data for each state. Depending upon the particulars of a state, the compilation effort requires approximately three to three and one half years and about sixth months processing time before a state gazetteer is published. The concise (abridged) volume of the National Gazetteer was published in October 1990. The attached map provides the status of Phase II compilation for the various states.


GEOGRAPHIC NAMES INFORMATION SYSTEM
DATA COMPILATION AND GAZETTEER PROGRAM
AUGUST, 1991
MONTANA
WYOMING
NEBRASKA
COLORADO
CALIFORNIA
OKLAHOMA
TEXAS
ALASKA
MINNESOTA
MICHIGAN
NEW YORK
MAINE
VT
NH
MA
CT
OHIO
KY
PUBLISHED VOLUMES
OF THE
NATIONAL GAZETTEER
NEW JERSEY 1982
DELAWARE 1983
KANSAS 1984
INDIANA 1986
KANSAS 1978
SOUTH DAKOTA 1980
CONCISE 1990
NORTH DAKOTA 1990
FLORIDA 1991

The National Gazetteer

"The National Gazetteer of the United States of America" is a compendium of placenames that identifies and describes manufactured and natural features in the United States. Seven State volumes and a concise volume covering the Nation have been published by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) as Professional Paper 1200. The published volumes are the most comprehensive gazetteers available for their respective States. The United States Concise Gazetteer, published in 1990, is a select list of geographic names for major places, features, and areas in the United States and its territories based on the USGS National Atlas. Gazetteer information is drawn from USGS topographic maps, other Federal and State materials, and from all available historical maps. Variant spellings of names are included, making the gazetteers a reference tool for historians, linguists, journalists, and genealogists, as well as cartographers.

Each name, whether of a manufactured feature such as a school, town, reservoir, or cemetery, or of a natural feature such as a stream, valley, or mountain, is listed alphabetically. Each entry includes the type of feature, the status of the name as determined by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, the name of the county in which the feature is located, the latitude and longitude, the elevation—where available, and the name of the USGS topographic map that shows the feature.

The National Gazetteer is a product of the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS). GNIS is being compiled in two phases. The first phase is complete for all States and areas under U.S. jurisdiction and includes most of the feature names found on the 1:24,000-scale maps published by the U.S. Geological Survey. The second phase involves the collection of current and historical names from other sources such as the National Ocean Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Communications Commission, and official State publications and local materials. A State gazetteer is published when Phase II information is complete, but an interim gazetteer is available earlier in the form of bound computer listings, magnetic tapes, and microfiche.

Standard bound listing prices are shown below. Tape costs range upward from $40, depending on the information desired. Microfiche files for States cost $2 each. Customized searches of the data are individually priced and can be conducted at any of the USGS's Earth Science Information Centers (ESIC's), and the results can be requested as bound listings or on magnetic tape.

To get ordering information for National Gazetteer products, contact any ESIC or call 1-800-USA-MAPS.

Questions about the National Gazetteer should be directed to the Chief, Branch of Geographic Names, U.S. Geological Survey, 523 National Center, Reston, VA 22092.

A factsheet describing the GNIS is also available.

Prices for Interim Listings

Alabama*	$29
Alaska	29
American Samoa	34
Arkansas**	29
California	34
Colorado	29
Connecticut	5
District of Columbia*	5
Florida*	29
Georgia	29
Guam	34
Hawaii	34
Idaho**	29
Illinois	29
Iowa**	18
Kentucky	29
Louisiana**	29
Maine	29
Maryland	18
Massachusetts	18
Michigan	34
Micronesia	34
Minnesota	34
Mississippi*	34
Missouri*	34
Montana	29
Nebraska**	18
Nevada*	34
New Hampshire	5
New Mexico**	34
New York	$29
North Carolina**	34
Ohio**	34
Oklahoma	18
Oregon**	29
Pennsylvania*	34
Puerto Rico	34
Rhode Island	5
South Carolina	34
Tennessee*	34
Texas	34
Utah*	29
Vermont	5
Virginia	29
Virgin Islands	34
Washington**	29
West Virginia	29
Wisconsin	29
Wyoming**	29

*Phase II is complete.
**Contains some Phase II information.

Published Gazetteers

Arizona (1986)	$31
Delaware (1983)	4.75
Indiana (1988)	29
Kansas (1985)	16
New Jersey (1982, minor rev. 1983)	7
North Dakota (1990)	10
South Dakota (1989)	14
Concise (1990)	29

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CONF.85/L.31
9 July 1992

ENGLISH ONLY

SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
New York, 25 August-3 September 1992
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE FIFTH CONFERENCE

Report of the United Kingdom

Paper submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

* E/CONF.85/1/Rev.1.

** Prepared by H. A. G. Lewis.

92-30200 4018a (E) 200792 230792

/...

1. Since the Fifth Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names was held at Montreal in 1987, the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names has been engaged in a number of projects. Among its principal activities has been the processing of all the names required for mapping the entire nation at 1:50,000 and 1:100,000 as part of international cooperation.

2. The Chairman of the PCGN has personally been involved for most of the period since the Fifth Conference on national mapping projects in a digital environment, which has included every aspect of the collection, processing and utilization of geographical names.

3. The PCGN developed jointly with the government authorities in the Maldives a romanization system for the Maldivian language. This system of romanization has been introduced in the maps and charts of the islands.

4. The Committee has taken part in a number of other international activities.

5. Various gazetteers have been produced for use by official bodies in the United Kingdom. All have been produced by computer technology.

ORDNANCE SURVEY OF GREAT BRITAIN

6. A few months before the Fifth Conference opened, the United Kingdom had completed, in response to a government demand, an inquiry into the handling of geographic information. The Committee charged with this task made important recommendations for the future. One of the major recommendations was to produce a unified digital database for Great Britain which would conform to the highest standards of quality and consistency. This, in fact, marked the transition from the production of digital cartography to the creation of a geographical information system (GIS).

7. The country was fortunate in having at its disposal basic scales of mapping at 1:1,250 and 1:2,500, the larger scale providing coverage of urban areas. It was equally fortunate in having a stable toponymy. Other national map scales are 1:10,000; 1:25,000; 1:50,000; 1:250,000 and 1:625,000. The complete database structured in GIS form will be completed by 1995. At present, over 140,000 maps exist in the required digital form out of a total of 230,895.

8. A major part of the work of the Ordnance Survey is now the provision of digital data and databases for government and private organizations. Basic source data for the national data bank includes the 1:10,000 series, making three scales in all - 1:1,250; 1:2,500 and 1:10,000. The 1:25,000 series is linked closely to the 1:10,000 scale.

9. Scales of 1:50,000 and 1:250,000 at the present time are derived separately, but research continues into the use of 1:10,000 scale data in the production of the 1:50,000 series.

10. There has been an increasing demand from users for the 1:250,000 scale data set which is both topographically and topologically of the highest quality.

11. Among the factors which made this possible were the declining costs of the hardware and great advances in software development. A National Transfer Format was an obligatory requirement for the supply of digital data to users, and compliance was achieved in 1990-1991.

12. As far as geographical names are concerned, the 1:50,000 series is the basis of the published Ordnance Survey gazetteer. At 1:250,000 scale there are names indexes associated with various products at that scale.

13. Geographical names are also associated with road centre line data for which there are many customers who use the data for calculating road distances and travel times. Names are also part of the Administrative Boundary-Line Dataset which, amongst many other applications, is used for analysis of census data, resource location, market research and local authority administration. Names can also be extracted from the large-scale database.

14. Whether used in administration or in management, in the operation of utilities or by private organizations, all names are derived from a common database and are, therefore, uniform.

15. Since, for many purposes, post-codes are used as a standard reference, post-code addresses are now linked to the National Grid map coordinate system.

16. Overall, the effect of the conversion to GIS format has been to preserve and, perhaps, consolidate the national stock of geographical names.

ORDNANCE SURVEY OF NORTHERN IRELAND

17. Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI) is the official survey, cartographic and reprographic organization for the Northern Ireland government. In 1985 a SysScan system, operating within a DEC VAX environment, was installed to convert the topographical archive of large-scale maps of Northern Ireland into a computer mapping and topographic database (COMTOD). The Greater Belfast and surrounding areas of more than 2,000 maps at 1:1,250 and 1:2,500 scales are now complete and the remainder of Northern Ireland is scheduled for completion near the end of this decade.

18. The graphic database structure contains some 190 separate levels and is a links and nodes structure capable of handling points, line-strings and polygons, with all map sheets edge-matched and merged eventually to provide homogeneous cover for the whole of Northern Ireland. The system also enables the inclusion of associated textual information linked to relevant geometry, the link being achieved through a unique, system generated, Irish Grid, 12-figure reference representing the x and y coordinates of any relevant geometric element. All of the names that are on the maps are included in the

database and some of the names are also included in the associated textual data. Owing to this structure of the database, it is possible to extract names for various purposes including the production of gazetteers.

19. COMTOD will provide the geographical foundation for development of the Northern Ireland Geographical Information System (NIGIS).

20. This is a distributed, but fully integrated, geographical information system through which all of the major government and public utility functions will be linked.

21. NIGIS will develop as a network of individual databases, each held and controlled by the owners at their several locations.

22. The number of participants in the NIGIS programme has expanded as GIS awareness has increased and typical bodies represented are the DOE (NI) divisions, which include: Roads Service, Water Service, Planning Service, Land Registry, Planning and Conservation, the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health and Social Services, the Valuation and Lands Office, the Geological Survey, the NI Electricity Service, the Housing Executive and British Telecommunications.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CONF.85/L.32
9 July 1992

ENGLISH ONLY

SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
New York, 25 August-3 September 1992
Item 12 (e) of the provisional agenda*

TOPONYMIC EDUCATION AND PRACTICE AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Transfer of technology to developing countries

Paper submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

---

* E/CONF.85/1/Rev.1.

** Prepared by H. A. G. Lewis.

92-30210 4017a (E) 200792 230792

/...

1. Even as recently as the Fifth Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in 1987, transfer of technology to developing countries was closely associated with the supply of costly computer equipment requiring numbers of highly trained computer staff. This is no longer the case. The power of the inexpensive micro-computer and the capabilities of the personal computer have changed the situation dramatically.

2. Personal computers are easy to use and they now have various database management systems that are eminently suitable for the processing of geographical names. There may be some limitations in the field length, but the PC is now a powerful tool and very versatile. Database systems are adequate for dealing with large volumes of names and suffice for handling the national archive of names in many cases.

3. With geographical names, the basic requirement is to store, to sort and generate lists. There is an added requirement for selecting by categories and a certain amount of analysis of the data, but those operations are well within the capacity of the personal computer.

4. It can be said, therefore, that the technology exists, and it is suitable for use in developing countries by reason of its low cost. The technology itself is no impediment to transfer of information between the more developed nations and the less developed. There are numerous hardware and software salesmen ever ready to find new markets for their wares.

5. Storage of names data, sorting and output, therefore, present no major difficulties. Yet there are factors which inhibit the successful use of modern technology in the less developed world. There is often a shortage of staff with the required knowledge and skills. There are competing demands for those who exist, but far more important is availability and quality of the data which would form the database. The quality of the data includes the quality of the writing systems used for the recording of names and the romanization of those systems where romanization is used.

6. There are very few bilingual or multilingual national databases. Those that exist are, generally, the product of digital cartography. It is difficult, therefore, to separate a geographical names database from digital cartography. It is, furthermore, to be hoped that digital cartography, including, in time, GIS technology, is part of the technology which will be transferred. In the case of bilingual digital cartography, the construction of a names database and the output of names data for use in mapping requires special development extending far beyond the skills required for the storage, sorting and output of names in list form. Databases designed for digital cartography do not often lend themselves to gazetteer production, and gazetteer production is far removed from a truly comprehensive geographical names database.

7. The real problems remaining in the construction of a names database are: the quality of field collection of names; the nature of the office processing; and, consequently the reliability of the data in the final database.

8. Those who have not worked in countries where these problems exist are, it can be said with certainty, unaware of all the pitfalls awaiting those who embark on field collection of names. It is often assumed that successful collection of names in the field requires no more than an educated national speaker of the language. That is almost never the case. The real requirement calls for considerable judgement on how to distinguish between local dialect and the formal language and in multilingual areas, how to find a "link" language between two linguistic areas. Above all, it requires a kind of skill built on experience, which few possess.

9. Office processing of names requires further experience in how to establish preferred names and sometimes a hierarchy of preference.

10. In discussing the transfer of technology, those sorts of questions are generally left out of the reckoning. They must not be left out. They are far more difficult to deal with than the possibility of transferring technology of a highly developed but simple kind, like the technology required for the simple operations of storing, sorting and producing lists. Furthermore, the kind of knowledge required, which will provide for digital cartography and a toponymic database of high reliability, is not easily acquired or simple to transfer.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CONF.85/L.33
10 July 1992
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
New York, 25 August-3 September 1992
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE FIFTH CONFERENCE

Report of the Romano-Hellenic Division

Submitted by the United Nations Group of Experts
on Geographical Names**

* E/CONF.85/1/Rev.1.

** Prepared by Sylvie Lejeune, Institut Géographique National.

92-30255 3290f (E) 220792 240772 290792

/...

The Romano-Hellenic Division met in Paris at the offices of the French Institut Géographique National on 3, 4 and 5 October 1990. Representatives of Canada, Cyprus, France, Greece, Portugal, Spain and Turkey attended the meeting.

Members of the division examined questions concerning European exonyms, the establishment of concise national nomenclatures, the preparation or dissemination of computerized files of toponyms, and the structure of national names authorities.

Since the European countries were especially concerned with the question of exonyms, the participants devoted most of the meeting to the study of that item. Canada, France, Portugal and Spain submitted a list of their principal exonyms. The participants re-examined, lists previously established, in particular the paper submitted on behalf of Turkey by Mr. Erinç at the Fifth United Nations Conference (Montreal 1987).

At the conclusion of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on the Standardization of Geographical Names (Geneva, 1991), the division decided to draft a common document, in each of the languages of the division and then in the other European languages, which would include, as a first step, the names of countries, capitals and administrative divisions.

Finally, the full summary of this meeting was published in Newsletter No. 8 (November 1991).